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ABSTRACT

This profile in outline form of the English language teaching situation in the United Republic of Cameroon discusses the role of English within the society and within the educational system. Cameroon is an officially bilingual state consisting of five francophone provinces and two anglophone provinces. In the anglophone provinces, English is the medium of instruction on all levels and is widely used as the official language of government and in business. In the francophone provinces, English is taught as a subject in secondary schools and is used as the partial medium of instruction on the university level. It is increasingly being recognized that English is of great importance as a means of international communication. Curriculum and programs of study in both English- and French-speaking provinces are described, as well as the status of teaching personnel and teacher training. Also discussed are the textbooks and instructional materials used, English instruction outside the educational system, and British support for the teaching of English. (AMH)

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ENGLISH TEACHING INFORMATION CENTRE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING PROFILE

Country: CAMEROON

December 1979

1. Role of English

1.1 The United Republic of Cameroon was created in 1972 out of the former Federal Republic which was formed on independence in 1960 from the French and British Trust Territories. It consists of five francophone provinces (Nord, Est, Centre-Sud, Littoral and Ouest) and two anglophone provinces (South-West and North-West) which have populations of approximately 5½ million and 1½ million respectively. Although Cameroon is officially a bilingual state using both French and English, the relative importance of the two languages is still reflected by the numerical distribution of the users. The fact, too, that the centre of government (Yaounde) and the main centre of commerce (Douala) are both in the francophone provinces means that English still plays the minor role.

1.2 In the two anglophone provinces, English is the medium of instruction in primary schools, secondary schools, the three primary teacher training colleges (two government, one mission), the secondary teacher training college and other tertiary institutions and is widely used as the official language of government and in business.

1.3 In the five francophone provinces where French is the medium of instruction in educational institutions at all levels, English is taught as a subject in secondary schools and is used as the partial medium of instruction in some degree courses at the University of Yaounde where sketchy facilities for service English also exist.

1.4 As a result of a decision by the government to introduce the teaching of English into primary schools as and when materials and trained personnel became available, a team of British Council-recruited ODA-funded ELT personnel have been engaged in producing and testing an English primary course for use in the top three years of the six year francophone primary school course. Teachers' and pupils' books for the first year of the course are expected to be printed and published by October 1980, with the materials for the second and third years following in 1981 and 1982. All students in five francophone primary teacher training colleges are now being taught five hours of English language improvement and five hours of methodology weekly to enable them to handle the course as class teachers and it is expected that all francophone primary teacher training colleges will be following the same programme from October 1980.

1.5 Although English is still little used as a means of communication in the francophone provinces and although the majority of government officials have only a rudimentary and mainly bookish knowledge of the language, it is increasingly being recognised that English, apart from being one of the two official languages of the country, is of great importance as a means of international and especially inter-African communication (outside francophone Africa) and many of the more senior

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government officials are making a serious attempt to learn it. There has been some spread of English in the francophone provinces resulting from the posting of anglophone government officials from the anglophone provinces but their influence has not been significant linguistically. The official government policy is to make Cameroon a completely bilingual country and it is because of this that there exists a growing desire on the part of large numbers of francophones in government to learn English, especially as many feel that it may enhance their promotion prospects.

2. English within the educational system

2.1 In considering the educational system of Cameroon, two important facts must be borne in mind. First, there are, in fact, two educational systems operating. In the anglophone provinces, there is an English medium system based on an inherited British tradition and in the francophone provinces there is a French medium system based on a French tradition. Secondly, there are very large numbers of private institutions in both the anglophone and francophone areas of the country, possibly in the ratio of two private schools to one government school. These private schools may vary from the long-established educationally sound mission schools to the purely commercially-run institutions, some of which may have lower educational standards. The operation of private schools is now controlled by a presidential decree (September 1976) which should lead to a general improvement of standards.

2.2 In the five francophone provinces, English is taught in a very small number of primary schools from the fourth year of school for 2½ hours (five periods) a week. As increasing numbers of students passing out of primary teacher training colleges with the ability to teach English are posted throughout the francophone provinces and as increasing numbers of trained francophone primary teachers capable of teaching English are identified in the field and given appropriate in-service training, the number of schools offering English as a subject should increase dramatically over the next two or three years.

2.3 In francophone secondary schools, English is taught for five hours a week for the first two years and for three hours a week for the remaining five years. An additional optional three hours a week of English (called 'Anglais Renforce') from the third year of secondary school is also possible but so far there does not seem to have been much enthusiasm for it. There is a special English paper in the Brevet d'Etudes du Premier Cycle (BEPC) taken at the end of the fourth year but English is not examined in the Baccalaureat, taken at the end of the seventh year, and so many pupils do not feel it is worthwhile spending time on a subject which will not give them a qualification of some sort at the end of it. No distinction is made in secondary schools between English language and literature.

2.4 In the two anglophone provinces, English is the medium of instruction in all educational institutions, French being taught as a subject in a small number of primary schools from the fifth year of the seven year course and in secondary schools. English literature appears as a separate subject in secondary schools which prepare pupils for GCE 'O' and 'A' level examinations in literature. All Form 5 pupils take the GCE 'O' level examination.

2.5 In the anglophone provinces, success in English plays a large part in promotion procedures whereas in the francophone provinces, success

or failure in English counts for very little. Success in English is not required for university entrance except for entry to bilingual degree courses.

2.6 The choice of text-books is controlled centrally as are the syllabuses.

2.7 Inspection of schools is carried out under the Inspector-General of Pedagogy who is assisted by national inspectors. In the provinces, each education delegate (i.e. director of education) has a number of inspectors and subject advisers for secondary level attached to his office and in the various districts in each province there are primary school inspectors. In each of the five francophone provincial capitals, there is a British Council-recruited ODA-financed inspector of primary English and in the two anglophone provincial capitals, there is a BC-recruited ODA-financed English Language Teaching Adviser.

2.8 English is taught to a limited extent in secondary technical institutions. At higher levels, though there is often time-table provision for some form of English for Special Purposes, there are no service English units as such nor has any lecturer been specially trained in ESP.

2.9 There is a Centre Linguistique in Yaounde where a fairly small number of adults learn English but there are no schools of English as such.

3. Teaching cadre

3.1 Teacher supply goes nowhere near to filling the demand in either the government or private sectors but private schools are much worse off in the supply and qualifications of teachers than government schools.

3.2 In the francophone provinces, approximately four-fifths of the teachers in government secondary schools are Cameroonian and one-fifth expatriate, mainly French. The ratio is approximately the same for private schools.

3.3 In the anglophone provinces, the vast majority of teachers in secondary schools are Cameroonian, the ratio being approximately 10:1 in government schools and 6:1 in private schools.

3.4 In both the anglophone and francophone provinces, staffing in primary schools is almost 100 per cent Cameroonian.

3.5 Government secondary school teachers of English are often graduates or holders of a teaching qualification; however, professionally unqualified teaching staff outnumber those qualified by approximately 2:1 in all subjects and there is no reason to believe that the situation is very different for English. In the private schools, there are almost no professionally qualified staff though many government secondary school teachers supplement their income by teaching in private schools.

3.6 The situation in the anglophone provinces is no better than in the francophone provinces; in fact, it is worse. The ratio of unqualified to professionally qualified staff in government secondary schools is approximately 3:1 and in the private secondary schools it is approximately 9:1.

3.7 Secondary school teachers of English are trained in the Ecoles Normales Superieures at Yaounde (Centre-Sud province) and Bambili (North-West province). A proportion of the English teachers from ENS Yaounde spend one year in Britain at a language school as part of their training. ENS Bambili trains anglophones to be teachers of English for the anglophone provinces but such is the shortage of teachers of English in the francophone provinces that last year almost the entire output of teachers from Bambili was posted to teach English in francophone secondary schools, whatever their specialist subject of study. The greatest source of supply of teachers of English is, however, still the University of Yaounde Department of English which produces literature graduates untrained in TEFL.

4. Teaching materials

4.1 Since students in all institutions at all levels have to buy their own text-books, there is often a shortage because they have no money to buy them. There are very few teaching aids available, though a few of the biggest schools have a minimum. Libraries are non-existent in primary schools, only a very few secondary schools have what might be called a library, primary teacher training colleges have few or no books, and the university has only a relatively small library considering its large number of students.

4.2 English has for some time been taught after a fashion in a very small number of Francophone primary schools in the main urban areas mainly by anglophone wives of government officials. However, quite apart from this, the BC/ODA ELT team has been testing materials using anglophone teachers of English all over the provinces and final testing using anglophone and francophone teachers is now taking place. When the new course (called 'Living Together') is finally produced (teachers' books and pupils' books for the first year's course should be published by October 1980), it is expected that this will be the approved English course for the top three years of francophone primary schools. In francophone secondary schools, the CLAD 'Today's English' course which was used almost universally for the first cycle has been totally replaced by 'English for French-speaking Africa'. The most usual second cycle English courses to be found are 'Practical English' (Ogundipe and Tregidgo) and 'Anglais en Afrique', neither of which is very appropriate.

4.3 In anglophone primary schools, Gagg's 'English Course for Cameroon Primary Schools' is almost universally used but it is expected that this course will be progressively replaced by the new CAMPEM (Cameroon Primary English Medium) course being produced by another BC/ODA ELT team. In anglophone secondary schools, 'Practical English' is the text most widely used.

5. English outside the educational system

5.1 There are no private commercial schools of English which properly deserve the name, though there are a few local enterprises of somewhat doubtful quality which attempt to teach English for money.

5.2 The United States Cultural Centre runs English classes on its premises on a fee-paying basis but the fees charged just cover the cost of the teacher and there is no definite policy to maintain or increase the amount of tuition offered.

6. British support for the teaching of English

6.1 The British Council is involved in the teaching of English in three main ways:

(a) acting as the recruitment agency for ODA-funded contract personnel
(b) giving administrative support to recruited contract personnel
and (c) providing professional assistance and guidance and over-all control and direction of the two main projects (the anglophone text-book project and the francophone text-book project).

6.2 Representative assesses the needs of the projects in terms of personnel and logistic support in conformity with the agreed country programme, provides direction, exercises overall control and assists with professional guidance in close liaison with English Language Management Unit in London. Assistant Representative gives administrative support to personnel in the field.

6.3 The following Council-recruited ODA-funded contract staff are at present operating in Cameroon:

Anglophone project

Institut de pedagogie appliquée à vocation rurale (IPAR)		- 1 text-book writer
Bamenda, North West Province		- 1 ELT Adviser
Buea, South West province		- 1 ELT Adviser

Francophone project

Inspection Generale de Pedagogie		- 1 co-ordiantor
"	+*	- 1 primary teacher trainer
Provincial Delegation for Education, Centre-Sud province	+	- 1 primary English inspector
Provincial Delegation for Education, Est province		- 1 primary English inspector
Provincial Delegation for Education, Littoral province		- 1 primary English inspector
Provincial Delegation for Education, Nord province		- 1 primary English inspector
Provincial Delegation for Education, Ouest province		- 1 primary English inspector
Ecole Normale d'Instituteurs Adjoints, N'kongsamba, Littoral province		- 1 ELT lecturer
Ecole Normale d'Instituteurs Adjoints, Pitoa, Nord province		- (vacant)

* Teaches at ENIA, Yaounde

+ Text-book writer

Ecole Normale d'Instituteurs Adjoints, Bertoua, Est province - (vacant)

Ecole Normale d'Instituteurs Adjoints, Bafoussam, Ouest province - (vacant)

Secondary teacher training

Ecole Normale Superieure, Yaounde - 1 ELT lecturer

Ecole Normale Superieure, Bambili - (vacant)

6.4 One IVS volunteer is assisting the primary English inspector in the Centre-Sud province and one is assisting the primary English inspector in Ouest province. Both will be leaving the project in August 1980 as a result of the withdrawal of IVS from Cameroon.

6.5 No other British teachers, apart from a few mission teachers in the anglophone provinces, are working in Cameroon.